

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 /058 W
-----008411 111739Z /53

P 111701Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5498
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 20090

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, FR
SUBJECT: JULY 8 SPEECH OF PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING
AT CARPENTRAS

REF: (A) MARSEILLE 0313, (B) PARIS 19694

SUMMARY. PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S SPEECH AT
CARPENTRAS CONTAINED NO SURPRISES. TRUE TO FORM, HE
POINTED TO BLUE SKY ABOVE THE CLOUDS IN SUCH A WAY
THAT MANY OBSERVERS, INCLUDING AMEMBASSY PARIS, CONSIDER
HIS SPEECH MORE ANODYNE THAN EVER. BY FINALLY ATTACKING
THE COMMUNISTS HE MANAGED TO APPEASE SOMEWHAT THE
GAULLISTS. BY PUTTING ACCENT MARKS ON HIS OWN UNIQUE
ROLE AS PRESIDENT, HE ISSUES AN INDIRECT POLITICAL WARN-
ING TO THE LEFT. VGE REMAINS TRUE TO HIS PRINCIPLES,
AND THE AFTERTASTE ON THE PART OF MOST FRENCHMEN IS
BASICALLY ONE OF INDIFFERENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH MUCH POST-SPEECH ANALYSIS POINTS TO PRESI-
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DENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S PUBLIC ADDRESS AT CARPENTRAS
AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TO DATE OF HIS TERM IN OFFICE,
THE SPEECH CONTAINED LITTLE OF A SURPRISING OR INNOVA-
TING NATURE. DEVOTED MAINLY TO INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND EVEN
STRESSING THE INTERNAL ASPECTS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, GIS-
CARD -- TRUE TO FORM -- DELIVERED BASICALLY A CALM AND
DISPASSIONATE PLEA FOR ORDER IN THE MAJORITY. VIEWING

THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECHES OVER THE PAST 3 YEARS, HOWEVER, WHAT EMERGES ARE TONES AND ACCENTS THAT LEND CREDENCE TO GISCARD'S OWN CLAIM OF HIS BEING ABOVE THE POLITICAL MELEE.

2. THOSE WHO, FOR THE PAST 3 YEARS, HAVE BEEN POINTING TO THE INCREASING PRESIDENTIALIZATION OF GISCARD'S REGIME, SEE THEIR ANALYSIS CONFIRMED. TIME AND AGAIN, WITH SUCH PHRASES AS: "THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC IS NOT ONE POLITICAL MAN AMONG MANY MIXED UP WITH THEIR RIVALRIES OR THEIR AMBITIONS", AND "MY ROLE IS TO WATCH OVER THE (POLITICAL) DEBATE FROM ON HIGH", THE PRESIDENT UNDERSCORED HIS POWERS AND SPECIAL POSITION. THUS WHEN, AT ONE POINT, GISCARD TOOK THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS TO TASK FOR IMPLYING THAT THEY WOULD MODIFY THE PRESIDENT'S POWER SHOULD THE LEFT WIN THE 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, HE SERVES THE TWO-FOLD PURPOSES OF BOTH REINFORCING HIS OWN POSITION AND HINTING AT THE TURMOIL THAT WOULD FOLLOW AN EVENTUAL LEFT VICTORY. (NOTE: BY NOT ATTACKING THE SOCIALISTS, HE REINFORCES THE BELIEF HELD BY MANY THAT HE WOULD ALMOST RATHER GOVERN WITH THE PS IN HIS MAJORITY THAN WITH THE RPR.)

3. IN A SPEECH THAT MANY CONSIDER THE OPENING SHOT OF THE LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGN, THE PRESIDENT EMPLOYED LANGUAGE AMBIGUOUS ENOUGH TO LEAVE GAULLIST FEATHERS CONFIDENTIAL

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BASICALLY UNRUFFLED, YET CLEAR ENOUGH TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WANTS PRIME MINISTER BARRE TO RUN THE SHOW. THE FACT THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD DELIBERATELY EMPLOY A CERTAIN DEGREE OF AMBIGUITY IS REVELATORY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CHIRAC'S POSITION AS THE UNDECLARED LEADER OF THE MAJORITY. NOTHING, HOWEVER, IS RESOLVED. THE PRESIDENT TALKED OF THE NECESSITY OF SOME KIND OF MAJORITY PROGRAM THAT WOULD BE USED TO COMBAT THE UNITED LEFT'S COMMON PROGRAM; BUT IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE ANY SIGNIFICANT PLATFORM BEING DRAWN UP IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS THAT WOULD NOT HAVE THE AIR OF A LEAST COMMON DENOMINATOR, OF A PATCHWORK QUILT COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT'S LIBERAL ADVANCED SOCIETY AND CHIRAC'S SLIGHTLY TEMPERED GAULLISM. NOR DOES THE PRESIDENT TOUCH ON THE PROBLEMS OF PRIMARY ELECTIONS AMONG MAJORITY CANDIDATES IN 1978. PREFERRING TO LEAVE THIS PANDORA'S BOX CLOSED FOR THE MOMENT, HE EXHORTS THE MAJORITY TO RESOLVE ITS PROBLEMS, AS HE HAS DONE SO OFTEN BEFORE. AS PREDICTED (REF B), CHIRAC GETS HIS KNUCKLES RAPPED AS CONCERNS THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. IN A SENTENCE IRONICALLY ILLUSTRATIVE OF DE GAULLE'S BEST MOMENTS, GISCARD, REFERRING TO THE NEAR STRIKE-OUT ON THIS

SPRING'S VOTE OF CONFIDENCE AND TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 20090

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, DECLARED THAT IN ORDER TO CONFRONT
THESE DIFFICULT SITUATIONS HE "MADE THE INSTITUTIONS OF
THE FIFTH REPUBLIC FUNCTION AND UTILIZED THE RESOURCES
THAT THESE INSTITUTIONS GIVE HIM."

4. ONE NOTEWORTHY ASPECT OF THE CARPENTRAS SPEECH IS
THE GAULLIAN TONE OF WHICH THE PRESIDENT MAKES INCREAS-
ING USE IN HIS PUBLIC ADDRESSES. IN THIS SENSE GISCARD
FLATTERS FRANCE, AND BY EXTENSION ALL FRENCHMEN, WHEN HE
SAYS THAT FRANCE "BRINGS TO AN UNCERTAIN AND DIVIDED
WORLD THE SPIRIT OF DIALOGUE." WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS
NOT THE VERACITY, OR LACK THEREOF, OF THE REMARK, BUT
THE FACT THAT GISCARD SHOULD USE SUCH LANGUAGE TO DRAW
IN THE SUPPORT OF FRENCHMEN AT LARGE; AND IT MUST HAVE
WARMED THE COCKLES OF RPR HEARTS TO HEAR GISCARD--
FINALLY, AS THEY SEE IT--LAMBAST THE COMMON PROGRAM.

5. WHILE GISCARD'S STYLE WAS MORE SEVERE THAN USUAL,
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THE SPEECH WAS HIS SECOND PRE-VACATION DON'T-WORRY-ABOUT-THE-SHIP-OF-STATE MESSAGE. BY DINT OF HAVING KEPT HIS COOL THROUGH THE TURMOIL OF THIS SPRING'S PARLIAMENTARY SESSION, GISCARD ADDS TO HIS CLAIM OF BEING AN IMPARTIAL LEADER. ON THE OTHER HAND, NOTHING IS CLEARED UP, NOTHING RESOLVED; THE HEAVENS ARE CERTAINLY NOT -- AS HE STATED AT ONE POINT -- CLEARING. EVEN THOUGH IT MAY BE UNFAIR TO EXPECT A SINGLE SPEECH TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE IMBROGLIO OF FRENCH POLITICS, IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE TO THE PRESIDENT'S ADVANTAGE TO EMPLOY SHARPER TERMS IN HIS PUBLIC ADDRESSES. CHIRAC'S POST-SPEECH REMARK WAS SIMPLY THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD FINALLY MADE A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, BUT "SENS" COULD MEAN EITHER DIRECTION OR SENSE. FAINT PRAISE IF EVER THERE WAS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, SPEECHES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 11-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PARIS20090
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770246-0153
Format: TEL
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770771/aaaacjso.tel
Line Count: 189
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9023f96d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 MARSEILLE 313, 77 PARIS 19694
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1904226
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: JULY 8 SPEECH OF PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING AT CARPENTRAS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, FR, (D'ESTAING, GISCARD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9023f96d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009